

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 01709 040950Z
ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 SS-14
SSO-00 INRE-00 /032 W
-----040953Z 054593 /20
O 040918Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1013

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 1709

NOFORN

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: 08,5, IN
SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER'S HEALTH

REF: STATE 24965

1. THE PRIME MINISTER HAD A BAD COLD AND APPARENTLY SOME SKIN PROBLEM LATE LAST WEEK AND EARLY THIS WEEK. SHE REPORTEDLY LOOKED HAGGARD AND WORN WHEN WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS SAW HER AT A GATHERING OF HER SUPPORTERS ON FEB 2, AND THIS ALSO WAS EVIDENT IN PRESS PHOTOS ON THAT OCCASION. EMBASSY FSL WHO SAW HER SEVERAL TIMES ADDRESSING CROWDS OUTSIDE HER HOUSE FEB 3 NOTED THAT SHE SEEMED MUCH BETTER THEN, IN GOOD SPIRITS. POLCOUNSELOR SHOOK HANDS WITH HER EARLY LAST WEEK WHEN POLISH FIRST SECRETARY GIEREK ARRIVED AT AIRPORT AND WAS STRUCK BY HOW WELL AND "BLOOMING" MRS GANDHI LOOKED ON THAT OCCASION.

2. WE HAVE NOTICED OVER LAST FEW YEARS THAT THERE ARE SHARP VARIATIONS IN MRS GANDHI'S PERSONAL APPEARANCE DEPENDING ON HER MOODS, HER HEALTH, AND THE DEGREE OF
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STRAIN SHE IS UNDER. THIS MAY REFLECT HER UNDERLYING HUMAN PERVERSITY. EARLY IN EMERGENCY PERIOD, FOR EXAMPLE, SHE WAS CLEARLY UNDER GREAT PRESSURE AND THIS SHOWED IN DARK CIRCLES UNDER HER EYES, MARKED RECURRENCE OF AN EYE TWITCH TO WHICH SHE HAS LONG BEEN SUBJECT, AND A GENERALLY DRAWN APPEARANCE. THIS FADED BY THE FALL OF 1975 AND HER GENERAL APPEARANCE HAS BEEN ONE OF GOOD

HEALTH AND CERTAINLY ENORMOUS ENERGY. SHE MAINTAINS AN INCREDIBLE SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS AND TRAVEL, AND LAST WEEK DANCED WITH GROUPS OF FOLKDANCERS IN DELHI.

3. RUMORS ABOUT HER HEALTH ARE BOTH RECURRENT AND UNCONFIRMABLE; THEY VARY FROM STORIES OF URINARY AND BLADDER PROBLEMS TO BREAST AND OTHER FORMS OF CANCER, AND PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS. WE HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO EVIDENCE AT THIS TIME THAT ANY OF THESE ARE WELL FOUNDED OR THAT MRS GANDHI'S ACTIONS OR POLICIES ARE BEING DICTATED BY HEALTH PROBLEMS OR FEARS OF HER IMMINENT MORTALITY. SHE IS, HOWEVER, 59 AND AT SOME POINT ONE OR MORE OF HE RUMORS MAY BECOME REALITY.
SCHNEIDER

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Reason:
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